

## Pluriversality Is Already Here

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### Abstract:

*Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible* by Arturo Escobar is an inspirational book that seeks to offer hope in the middle of the civilizational crisis we are facing. The collection of eight essays is a call to recognize the existence of different worlds — or different ontologies — and the radical interdependence that binds all of us — human, nonhuman, and more-than-human. Beyond enriching our imagination with the possibilities of re-existence enacted by indigenous or Afro-descendant peoples from Abya Yala, the book offers some theoretical tools for extending thought.

### Pluriversität ist bereits da

#### German Abstract:

*Pluriversale Politik: The Real and the Possible* von Arturo Escobar ist ein inspirierendes Buch, das inmitten der zivilisatorischen Krise, mit der wir konfrontiert sind, Hoffnung geben will. Die Sammlung von acht Essays ist ein Aufruf, die Existenz verschiedener Welten — oder verschiedener Ontologien — und die radikale Interdependenz anzuerkennen, die uns alle — Menschen, Nicht-Menschen und Mehr-als-Menschen — einschließt. Das Buch bereichert nicht nur unsere Vorstellungskraft mit den Möglichkeiten der Re-Existenz, wie sie von indigenen oder afro-abstammenden Völkern aus Abya Yala praktiziert werden, sondern bietet auch einige theoretische Werkzeuge, um anders zu denken.

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How to abandon the idea of a unique paradigm of existence, the idea of a One-World World (OWW)? Where can we find practices and discourses that are challenging the dominant discourse of modernity? Can we recognize that the imperative of development — as part of the modern package within the OWW — has prejudiced peoples from the Global South more than having helped them in their own realization? And how can we imagine other possibilities of well-being for all peoples beyond these imperatives? These are some questions that flow through all of the eight essays that constitute Arturo Escobar’s book *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*. The questions emerge once and again under different scopes, by turns empirical, academic, and poetic.

*Pluriversal Politics* brings fresh inspiration to the reader nourished by the actual lives and thoughts of ‘peoples in movement’ — people who are part of communities in the Pacific, who are creating new horizons beyond the modernistic way of development while facing territorial struggles. In this sense, Arturo Escobar succeeds in broadening “the collective imagination to the idea that a certain kind of politics, an ontological politics toward the pluriverse” is already possible (p. X). The book presents a collection of essays that were written between 2014 and 2017, most of them originally in Spanish. Arturo Escobar is a Colombian anthropologist and activist who has written several articles and books. The book presented here is an opportunity for the English-speaking audience to better comprehend the set of concepts and ideas that are present in the thought of Arturo Escobar. A thought, the author would probably say, that exists from its relationality and interconnectedness with social movements and other humans and non-humans alike.

Some of the recurrent concepts throughout the essays are communality, autonomy, and territoriality. These concepts appear as an entangled formula required for thinking and living otherwise; or for strengthening other alternative ways of being, knowing, and doing: other alternative ontologies. The point of departure of the book's argument is that within the modern hegemonic logic, we humans interact with the world as if the world was a separate entity from us. This vision leads us to think of the world with a dualistic ontology full of divides — e.g., subject/object, reason/emotion, culture/nature, human/nonhuman, etc. The author posits that this dichotomic view has taken us to the civilizational crisis in which we are now — a crisis of climate, energy, poverty, inequality, and meaning — and calls for a search for different ontologies.

The collection of essays starts with an invitation for rethinking 'reality.' From the first chapter onwards, the author asks us, the readers, to open our minds by paying attention to two dimensions. First, to the existence of other worlds where the real has a different meaning than in the hegemonic modern view. Second, to ourselves, as people of modernity and subjects who believe in 'the real.' Then, the author presents four major sources for rethinking the real through exploring possible nondualist ways of living: the original people's cosmovisions, matristic cultures, Buddhism, and academic sources interested in portraying a world beyond dualisms.

The second chapter "From Below, on the Left, and with the Earth" is a call to see critical thinking in Latin America as more flourishing than ever and not in crisis as other theorists have suggested. Escobar proposes that Latin American critical thinking is formed by three streams of thought, which are the left thought, the thought from below and the earth thought. The author mentions the importance of theoretical contributions such as materialism and feminism. However, he highlights even more the contribution from the very experiences of 'peoples in movement' — rather than social movements — who defend their territories and their ways of living; and the recognition of relationality or "the radical interdependence of all living things" (p. 40). The last two contributions redirect us to question the idea of the individual and therefore, to challenge the modern liberal paradigm.

Chapter four “Sentipensar with the Earth” constitutes one of my favorite essays from Arturo Escobar. The author starts with presenting the framework of Epistemologies of the South which underscores that the production of knowledge is beyond the dominant form of Euro-modernity. Epistemologies of the South was developed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (*Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, New York 2015) and foregrounds the need of looking into different epistemic configurations amid relational worlds in struggles. Along with this, Escobar develops the idea of ‘relational ontologies’ which stresses the interconnectedness between different beings or entities which are always entangled with territories. Therefore, the author shows that territorial occupations are at the same time ontological occupations. Both theoretical formulations render visible the idea of the *pluriverse*, a world made up of multiple worlds — instead of a OWW — and make possible to think about the needed civilizational transitions.

Chapters three and five are dedicated to scrutinizing the way epistemes are formed, how the direction of the truth is built, and the need for embracing the epistemes of peoples of the Earth in order to displace the view of modernization as the only path to progress. Chapter three departs from a revision of Michel Foucault’s concepts of statement, archive, discursive formation, and episteme present within his discursive perspective. Chapter five develops a thoughtful characterization of epistemic practices that delineates the “modern academic space” (p. 86).

Chapters six, seven and eight foster reflections around the developmentalist effects. Chapter six presents a conversation between Arturo Escobar and Gustavo Esteva, where they reflect upon their ideas on development from early debates until current times. In chapter seven, Escobar states that the actual planetary crisis needs to look for answers in the latter cosmovision, and by fostering dialogues of world visions (*diálogos de saberes*). Finally, in chapter eight, the author encourages us to think in a transition design based on autonomy, even under though conditions caused by developmentalist logics.

*Pluriversal Politics* is an inspirational book that not only makes us believe in the possibilities of civilizational transitions, but also offers some theoretical tools and intuitive clues for academics concerned with the decolonization of knowledge, critics to development and

modernity, and political ontology. At all times, the book directs our attention to see pluriversal worlds, even in relation to modernity. Escobar constantly emphasizes the idea that we — indigenous, Afro-descendent, occidentals from Global North and South — need to abandon the paradigm of modernity and the hope of development. The book is a great entry point to the work of one of the most influential social scientists from Latin America.